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Review of *Canada's Wheat King: The Life and Times of Seager Wheeler*. By Jim Shilliday

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season, for example. Although much of this work was done through dominion or federal experimental farms, private farmers such as Canada's Seager Wheeler used intense seed selection and small plot research to develop and stabilize crop characteristics. Jim Shilliday's fascinating biography of the life and times of Seager Wheeler opens a window onto an era when the possibilities of western Great Plains and prairie agriculture were boundless.

Seager Wheeler is well known in Canadian agricultural history as the small and shy Saskatchewan farmer from the Rosthern area who won an unprecedented—and unsurpassed—World Wheat King title five times between 1911 (when the prize was first introduced) and 1918. Through the height of his fame in the war years and the Roaring Twenties, Seager Wheeler's wheat, his farming methods, and his Maple Grove Farm—drawing as many as 700 visitors in a weekend—became North American celebrities. Shilliday's biography opens with Wheeler's childhood on the Isle of Wight, the family's migration to Canada in 1885, and Wheeler's subsequent growth as a farmer and his interest in seed selection and farming practices. Shilliday contends that undue glory has been heaped on Dr. Charles Saunders as the creator of Marquis wheat, the strain that opened both the Canadian West and much of the northern Great Plains. The real story, Shilliday argues, is the stabilization of Marquis 10B through Wheeler's careful seed selection practices. Shilliday writes: "as the U.S. prepared to enter World War I, 40% of the wheat grown in Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota and Minnesota was Marquis 10B, a wheat that became the measure of quality into the 1960s." Moreover, Wheeler developed Red Bobs, an early-maturing variety credited with opening the Peace River area of Alberta, the most northern sweep of the interior Plains region.

The writing is fluid and simple, and each chapter, in true literary style, ends with either a commentary or a cliffhanger. The photographs are clear and well chosen, with a good balance of field and family, if perhaps too many of the Isle of Wight, and not enough of the farm where his work took him to fame. There are a few historical stumbles: for example, Shilliday's sketch of the 1885 Riel Rebellion paints it as an Indian uprising, contrary to recent scholarship such as Bill Waiser and Blair Stonechild's *Loyal Till Death* (1997), which portrays a clear distinction between Métis and Indian roles. But overall, *Canada's Wheat King* offers an entertaining and informative biography of a man who did much to promote agriculture on the prairies and Great Plains. **Merle Massie**, *Department of History, University of Saskatchewan*.

Canada's Wheat King: The Life and Times of Seager Wheeler. By Jim Shilliday. Regina, SK: Canadian Plains Research Center, University of Regina, 2007. vii + 177 pp. Photographs, bibliography, index. \$19.95 paper.

One of the key accomplishments that contributed to opening the Canadian and American West to agricultural settlement was the development of marketable crops that *could* be grown on the tallgrass and shortgrass prairies. Various cereal strains were carefully bred, selected, and stabilized to enhance or minimize particular traits—color, hardness, rust and sawfly resistance, or a shorter growing